

Regarding North Carolina state law:

1. North Carolina endangered species laws apply to set of species listed by the state as endangered or threatened. This list of species includes Federally listed species as well as species considered Endangered, Threatened or of Special Concern in this state.
2. The plant and animal endangered species laws are modeled after the ESA, in that illegal trafficking or poaching of listed species is illegal.
3. The state endangered animal species law states that *"no rule may be adopted that restricts use or development of private property"*.
4. The state endangered plant species law specifically states that *"the incidental disturbance of protected plants during agricultural, forestry or development operations is not illegal so long as the plants are not collected for sale or commercial use"*.

For more details and updated regulations relating to the rare species in North Carolina contact the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission or North Carolina Department of Agriculture.

Evaluation of Site Biological Significance

Determination of site biological significance draws on the raw data collected from field surveys and the experience of professional biologists. Site significance is primarily influenced by the quality, condition, and rarity of natural community types and rare species present, the size of the site, and the ecological integrity or long-term viability of the site. Other considerations may include overall floristic and animal diversity, presence of species that are uncommon or that are ecological indicators of special habitats, potential animal habitat, and degree of connectivity with other natural areas. The biological significance rating is meant to be as objective as possible. It is not influenced by ownership or prospects for conservation of a site.

Site biological significance is assigned at four levels: County, Regional, State, and National. Significance at county, state, and national levels is probably fairly obvious. Less obvious is regional significance, which usually indicates that a site is one which is biologically significant in an area including the county of occurrence as well the counties contiguous with it, which share similar biogeographic features.

The process by which site biological significance is designated for a site begins with the significance assigned by the field surveyor, but also involves consultation with biologists at the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program (NC NHP). Site Survey Forms prepared by the surveying biologist are evaluated by biologists at NC NHP and compared with statewide information on similar sites (i.e., those with the same natural community types, rare species, and other attributes). If, in comparison with similar sites, a site does not appear to merit the assigned